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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Autism Awareness Month: Community Members Invited to Participate in Activities at the Merchant Street Art Gallery in Downtown Kankakee

Kankakee, IL – April is Autism Awareness Month. One in 59 children is estimated to have autism according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is usually first diagnosed in childhood with many of the most obvious signs presenting around two to three years old.

The Merchant Street Art Gallery of Artists with Autism has been highlighting local talent for several years and is located at 356 East Merchant Street in downtown Kankakee. The gallery has gained national and international attention. Their newest artist is a young boy from Brazil.

“Although autism is a lifelong condition, many children diagnosed with ASD go on to live independent, productive, and fulfilling lives. Many people with autism excel in one or more areas. For instance, a person who has great artistic skills might not be able to do math. Here at the gallery, we acknowledge this challenge and help the artist with autism develop the art skills they have. Our goal is for them to eventually be able to use their artistic skills in a place of business and support themselves,” said Janice Miller, Director of the Merchant Street Art Gallery.

In honor of Autism Awareness Month, community members are invited to hunt for hidden puzzle pieces with prizes written on the back, as well as contribute to the community puzzle by personalizing a large jigsaw piece in the studio which will be on display. The Melodies of Spring Art Show is currently on display in the gallery, and staff are currently preparing for a virtual art show in Orland Park, Illinois starting next month.

“The Merchant Street Art Gallery is only one of four of its kind in the nation serving artists with autism. We are thrilled to have such a staple right here in downtown Kankakee highlighting not just local artists, but artists all over the world. I encourage

everyone to stop by and see the unique displays they have while discovering amazing talent right here in our community,” said Mayor Wells-Armstrong.

The gallery is open to the public from 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The gallery is also open on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.merchantstreetartgallery.org/> or follow the gallery on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ArtistsWithAutism15>.

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The City of Kankakee is dedicated to protecting, building, and nurturing the community while enhancing lives. We are a historic, vibrant, and active riverfront community. We continue to transform into an extraordinary place to dream, grow, and thrive. Embracing our diversity, we strive to be progressive, inclusive, and innovative. For more information on the City of Kankakee, please visit the website at www.citykankakee-il.gov.